857 Learning, as they do, the native names of all these creatures and their habits, they certainly acquire a great amount of knowledge during these years.

5) Playing.

857 533 Sometimes the weather is bad ; it rains or it is dreadfully hot. Then the goatherd suffers, and his elder brother comfortably sitting in the hut trills this song :

> Far away, there where he is, he weeps, the little boy.
> The keeper of the goats and of the calves !

But the bad days are rare and the boys play more than they cry! 524 The *games* of the Thongas are very numerous and are played either during the day or in the evening, especially when the moon shines. I shall here only consider the boys' games, and speak of the girls' later on.

Ngulube yi da mimphobo. (The pig eats mealie cobs). One child plays the part of the pig ; crawling along, covered with a mortar and a piece of cloth, he goes from one hut to another followed by a troup of his friends, who clap their hands and sing the foregoing words. People give food to the pig. It is received by its friends. When they have visited all the yards, they assemble on the central place of the village and eat the food together. Sometimes the pig suddenly turns round and attacks his followers, who flee in terror.

The game of *nsema.* This is a disk of woven grass made by boys. They pick up sides. The nsema is set rolling by one side and the opponents must run towards it and pierce it with their sticks before it falls to the ground. It is not allowable to touch it when it has fallen (yi holile). This game goes on till the disk is quite spoilt (yi bolile). Then the two sides rush upon each other and exchange a sound cudgelling, after which they all go and bathe in the nearest pool without any ill-feeling.

There is another game played with this disk, the game of the *ndlopfa-ndlopfana* (that is to say " the little elephant "). A boy

l: Junod M-5 (1895-1909)1927 Thonga

524 makes a nsema, ties it to a string made of the fibres of certain palm-trees, and hides. His comrades try to pierce his grass disk. But he watches. He has the right to chase them and to beat them with his stick. If the opponent succeeds in piercing the disk, in pulling it and tearing it from the string, ndlopfa-ndlopfana is vanquished.

The game of *homane* is very similar to English hockey. The fruit of a palm tree, which is round and very hard, is used as a ball, and hit with a stick into the opposite camp. If the *homane* falls between the two camps, the players rush upon it and, with their sticks, try to send it into their opponents' quarters.

In another boys' game, the *tlhuba holwane*, which is played mostly by moonlight, they also take two sides. A stick is planted in the earth by one side and a piece of charcoal placed upon it. One of the opponents comes, hopping like a frog, takes out the stick and, still hopping, goes and plants it in his own ground. If he reaches the goal without falling, he has won. An opponent will take his turn, pull out (tlhuba) the stick and bring it back to his partners. Evidently the Ronga children find this amusing!

The game of the *beetle* (shifufunu) is played as follows : one child is the beetle, and, as a distinguishing mark, he puts a handkerchief round his head. A hole is dug in the sand; he enters it and nestles in it as do some insects, until he is nearly covered with earth. He remains there perfectly still whilst his comrades sing to him the following song :

Beetle of mine...
I will marry thee...
For the price of an ox...
} Say "yes" to your brother.

There is another game of the same kind : *the honey pitcher is stirred* (mbita ya bulombe ya reka-reka). The children face each other in two rows and clasp hands. One of them lays himself on their arms, and all swing him, singing the same song.

The boys also play the game of *the man with the huge back who could not get out* (shikulukukwana sha ku ka buhumo). They form a circle, one standing in the centre. He hunches his back

524 and rushes forward, head foremost, trying to break the circle and to get out either between their legs or otherwise. If he does not succeed they give him this long and comical name: shikulukukwana sha ku ka buhumo.

533 Quite a number of little melodies are sung by children to certain animals. When we came back in the evening to the plain of Rikatla with our ox-drawn waggon, all the goatherds used to meet us and to accompany us a long stretch of the road, shouting in honour of the oxen: " Gweymanaô, Gweymanaô (1) "! Girls joined in the demonstration, pointing out the strange machine to the babies carried on their shoulders (2).

524 *Nkwama wa ku.* (Your purse)... When they eat green mealies, one of the older goatherds gives to another some of the leaves covering the cob and tells him to go and throw them away. He refuses to do so. Then the elder one collects all these leaves, rolls them up in a ball and throws them to the boy who refused, saying to him: " Your purse ". The boy answers: " It is not mine! " They all run away. He picks up the ball and tries to throw it to another, saying the same thing. Should he miss him, they will mock him and say: " You are not a man, you are but a little boy! "

Shifufunu sha paripari. This is a kind of big Tenebrionida beetle which beats the ground with its abdomen (Psammodes Bertoloni). Groups of children, boys together or girls together, play two by two. One of the two lies down facing the ground and the other sits on his back, looking forwards, to guard the head of the one who is prone. He sings while beating the other's back: " Shifufunu sha paripari ndjuluka hi yetlele!... Beetle turn up that we may lie down! " At once all the children who were sitting throw themselves down and those who were lying down sit on their backs, and so on...

To develop their courage, boys have another more dangerous game; this is *the war on the wasps* (mipfi). In their country there

(1) See for the tunes of these and other songs *Les Chants et les Contes des Ba-Ronga* pages 34 to 64, and also Vol. II. Part V.-Ch. III.

(2) It is customary to show to babies extraordinary and fearful sights, a white man passing, for instance, in order to " open their minds. "

In their country there

524 are big nasty yellow-brown hornets (a kind of Belonogaster)
136 which build more or less circular nests, sometimes attaining to the size of a man's head. On a certain day the boys decide to make war on these enemies. They make shields with the leaves of the *nala* palm tree which they plait together.

524 They cut down branches, which they wave to protect themselves, and one of them goes and strikes a heavy blow on the wasps' nest! The irritated insects rush out on their assailants and sting them. The boys try to kill the wasps with their sticks or to crush them when they light on them. Sometimes, overcome by the pain, they run away; sometimes, resisting to the last, they kill and exterminate their winged enemies.

Besides this there are also *big battles between the shepherds* of the different flocks. The shepherds amuse themselves by taking one another's cattle. Those who are the strongest bring the stolen herd triumphantly back to the neighbourhood of their village, but they would never let it enter the kraal. The vanquished call to their help their elder brothers, who come to recover their property and, if they can, give the thieves a sound thrashing!

578 Insults and fights are frequent between the clans. The boys
262 of Mpfumu call out to those of Matjolo: " Forest gadders! Eaters
291 of snails and boas, of lizards and tortoises " (all of which are questionable food!) (In Ronga: Balala! Badi ba tihumba ni tinhlaru ni makhwahle ni tinfutchu). Those of Matjolo answer them: "Crowd of women that you are, clad in cotton material!" (Babasati! Matchimbamphela!), in reference to the fact that the inhabitants of Mpfumu, living near the town, some time ago replaced the belt of skins worn by the savages by a piece of cotton tied to the waist and hanging down to the knee (ladula).

855 The custom of frightening children with imaginary beasts is
857 wide spread amongst the Thongas. The bogey man is called
538 *Shingomu-Ngomu* or else *Shikunkunuunu*, and by this very expressive
761 word they designate a huge and mighty being who walks, swaying his big body from right to left, with a sound like *ngomu-ngomu*. The ogre is *Shitukulumukumba*, a word coming originally from the Zulus, which corresponds to the Ronga *Ñwambilutimhokora*, that is to say: " the one who has scales on the heart. " He eats

855 538 human beings. These imaginary creatures play a large part in the native tales, especially the one who "has scales on the heart." He feeds on vermin, lice and big white beetle larvae, which are his almonds (1).

855 When a child cries and cannot be comforted, someone goes and hides behind the hut and slaps his neck saying: "U-u-u," while

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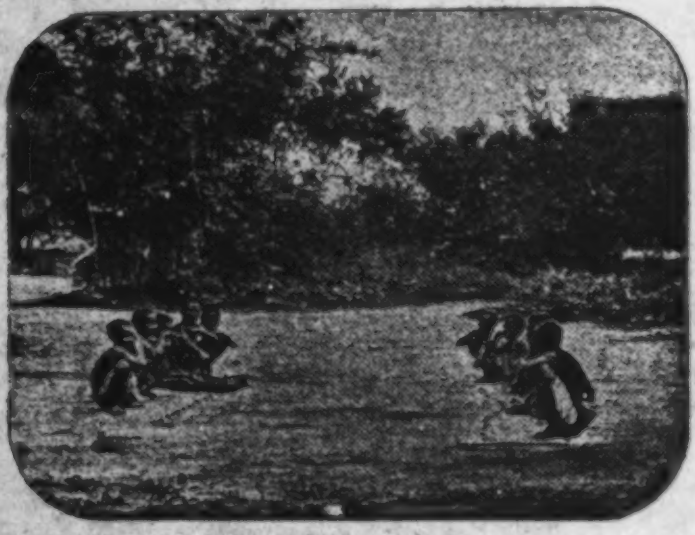

Boys trying to play Billiards
at Masuku's near Antioka Station.

those remaining with the lamenting little one say to him: "Be quiet, listen! Shikunkununu is coming!"

857 There are also the *timbelembele*, a kind of terrible wasp which only exists in the imagination of children. When a boy does not dare to follow his companions up a tree which they have climbed, they shout to him: "Make haste! Here are the timbelembele coming to bite you!" And he is so frightened that he at once finds strength to climb.

(1) We shall given complete ogre tale in Part V.

524 Thonga boys are so fond of games that they even try to imitate
177 those of the Europeans. In the accompanying illustration, they are seen sitting in two rows throwing some projectiles along the ground. I wondered what game this was, and was informed that these boys, having seen Portuguese officials playing billiards at the camp, had attempted to do the same, and this was the result!

C. THE AGE OF PUBERTY

I. *Circumcision rites.*

1) Spread and origin of circumcision amongst the Thongas.

957 As he grows up, the Thonga boy leaves the flock of goats and is entrusted with the care of the big cattle, oxen and cows,
881 when his father owns any. He becomes very proud, and tyran-
882 nises over his younger brothers; he calls himself their "hosi,"
866 their chief, and sends them to work for him; in Maputju, big boys went so far as to scorn water brought from the pool by women, and only to use water specially fetched by small boys. If they grow so important in their own eyes, the reason is that special rites are performed on them during this period, rites which are calculated to give them great self-confidence. Amongst these rites, some have a direct relation with the sexual life and some represent only the entrance upon manhood. Let us begin with a study of circumcision, then we will take the other puberty rites and the habit of *gangisa*.

881 In a great many Bantu tribes, the age of puberty is marked
304 by ceremonies of initiation, often accompanied by circumcision. There is little doubt that circumcision was practised throughout the Thonga tribes in former times. It is still current with those Thongas who emigrated into the Transvaal, and this is not a custom borrowed from the Pedi clans, which have all preserved circumcision. Though the Thongas often receive initiation in Pedi schools, in the Spelonken, they possess their own schools

888 sent to bring her food. When they are hungry, they stop on the way and eat it themselves. On their return they say: 'We have indeed given it to her.' In the morning they put a stick in her hand and help her to get out of her hut, so that she can warm herself in the sun.

"Then when the Ronga woman is quite old she begins to see no more and to hear no more. She falls into second childhood. All she does is to complain and to say, crying, that she is ill treated. And this is the end!"

The girl who wrote this essay was but emerging from childhood, and has consequently enlarged more especially upon the first phase of the life. The life of a woman is not very different from that of a man at that stage. Differences however come in later on, and we shall have to add some important facts relating to the fate of women before marriage, during the conjugal life, and in widowhood.

A. BEFORE MARRIAGE

I. *The Girls' games.*

857 324 [868] 864 As we have seen from the essay of the schoolgirl, Ronga girls imitate the doings of their mothers, their cooking, their gathering of fuel, etc., just as the boys imitate the fighting and hunting of the men. They also play with *dolls*, nursing them as they see the women nursing babies. These dolls are called *vule*. The origin of the game is as follows. A little girl asks her mother who is carrying a younger child on her shoulders: Mother, where did you find your baby? — Oh! I found it in the bush (ntlhaben). — Please bring me one also, mother. — All right!— Next day the mother plucks a sala in the bush, removes all the stones inside it, lets it dry and fixes it to the end of a stick. She pierces the upper part of the sphere, passes bits of string through the holes to imitate hair, smears them with ochre, ties a little clothing round

857 the stick and gives it to the girl! Or if the mother says : "I found
324 the baby in the banana grove," the father will cut a banana stem,
864 take the heart of the bulb and beat it so as to separate the fibres, which will then represent the hair of the baby ; the girl will then play with it for a time.

Girls, like boys, have also special games.

524 First the *ntshengu -ntshengu*. A big girl takes the part of the mother and all the little ones hide behind her. She stretches out her arms to protect them against another girl, who is the thief and tries to take the children away. Notwithstanding the mother's efforts, all are taken one by one, and the stealing is done whilst they sing :

Alack ! Mother ! Protect us, protect us !

The mother answers :

All my children are taken, all will soon be taken,
All will soon be taken, there, behind me.

(Yo ! Mamana ! ntshengu-ntshengu ! ba hela hi shiruba .

The capture being effected, all the children sit down in a row and cross their legs. To their right and left they dig small holes which represent wells or pots. The mother passes. She stretches out their legs and they allow her do this. Then she pretends to drink water from their pitchers and says: "My child, where did you find this water ?" The child says : "Oh! I have drawn it over there, at the spring, under the banana trees, in the cool shade." Then comes the girl who plays the part of the thief. She tries to stretch out their legs. But the children refuse ; they stiffen themselves. She tastes their water and enquires where they brought it from. "I drew it in a nasty hole full of frogs, mud and dirt." They add all the different remarks they can think of.

524 As the boys sing to the transport oxen when a wagon comes
136 along the road, so the girls address a kind of *incantation to a big*
533 *grey lizard* called *galagala*, which can turn its head blue at will. The lizard is found lying on a branch, warming itself in the rays

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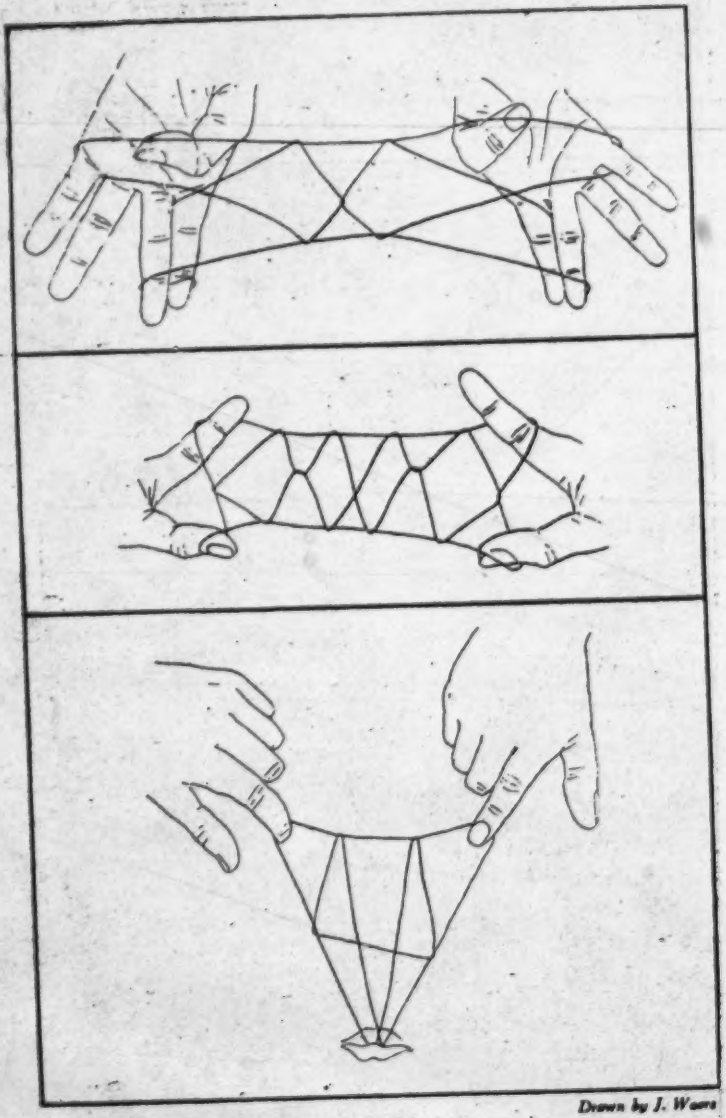

Drawn by J. Weavs

Various forms of buhlolo (string game.)

524 of the sun. One girl approaches it, and claps her hands under its nose, singing in a monotonous tone :

Gala-gala, hana-hana shloko !
Big lizard, lift up, lift up your head !

It seems that the lizard is so fascinated by the song that he stretches his neck and swings his head to and fro during the whole time that the girl claps her hands.

524 136 226 To the *crabs*, which are very numerous in the slime on the sea-shore, and have only one claw, coloured green, violet or enamel blue, they sing :

Ba ka mphembemuiwe, tlakula silawuto !
Come along, you animals with only one claw ! Lift it up and bring it down again.

The little girls who go hunting crabs as a condiment for their food assured me that, on hearing this song, the crustaceans do come out of their holes, and that the harvest is then a large one.

When an *owl*, mistaking the time, comes out of her hiding place at noon, she is received with applause, and they sing to her :

Shikotana, gsukela fole !
Owl ! flap your wings ! You will find tobacco !

524 Another girls' game, which is wide-spread, and in which the young Thongas acquire great proficiency is called : *ku tha buhlolo*. They take a string tied at both ends so as to form a large ring, and make all kinds of complicated figures by twisting it with their fingers and even with their lips. I have made a drawing of some of them. Girls compete together and try to surpass each other in inventing new figures. They teach each other this *buhlolo*.

Another old game, which is found under various forms in a great number of countries, is the *mathakisana*, knuckle bones. Girls gather stones of the nkanye fruit (tinfula), dig a hole, and put them into it. One of them takes a kind of ball (shigungu), perhaps a small sala fruit or any other fruit. She throws it in the air and, in the meantime, takes out of the hole four or five stones and puts them back, leaving only one outside. This stone is then

524 put aside. She must be very clever and very quick in removing and replacing all the stones except one, because the ball will soon fall down and she must catch it in her hands. Should she take only one stone out of the hole, she has failed (a tjongolile) ; should she leave more than one stone outside of it, she has again failed (a hoshile). Should the ball fall to the ground, it is taboo. (psa yila)! She has lost her turn. If the ball falls on her body, it is not so bad. Her companions will say to her : "Gangasheta." Then she must throw the ball and catch it two or three times on the upper part of her hand, then again in her hand, and if she succeeds in this, she is allowed to go on. When she has been able to take all the stones from the hole without making any mistake, she has beaten her co-players (a ba mphyinshile).

525 Natives do not play for stakes as a rule, but, if two of them challenge each other, each claiming to be the best at the game, they may arrange that the one who loses must give a fowl to the winner.

The ordinary word for *play* is *ku tlanga*. But there is another word *ku tha*, which is used for the more refined games, the buhlolo, the mathakusana, the tshuba, the reciting of tales, riddles or proverbs (psitekatekisa) and guessing games (mhumhana). We shall describe these four last games when treating of the life of the village and literary life.

II. *Nubility customs.*

1) The Khomba rite.

881 When a girl comes of age, no special ceremony is performed amongst the Ba-Ronga. She is said, just like the boy, to have "drunk the nkanye" (page 95). She confesses to her mother that her menses *(tinwheti, viz. months)* have appeared for the first time, and the mother simply answers : "Hi ku kula"— "this means growth."

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make the man drunk at once. It is called *shingwandja*, when pure, and is not liked, whilst they say that when it has gone through water, it has an agreeable taste. It makes the smokers cough terribly, but they thoroughly enjoy this exercise.[1] Moreover it excites an abundant flow of saliva which is the chief requisite for their favourite game. They take a hollow grass, called *shenga*, and begin the fight by blowing their saliva through it on to the ground. The simplest form of the game consists in squirting as

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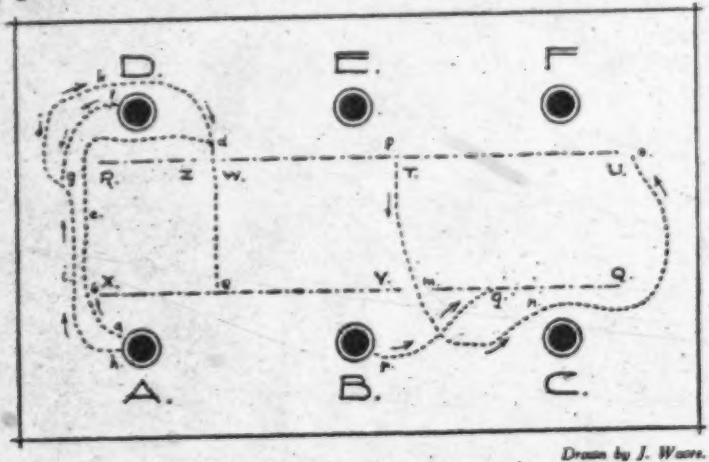


Drawn by J. Weare.

Illustration of the saliva contest of hemp-smokers.

long streams of saliva as possible. He who squirts the furthest wins. But it is sometimes much more complicated. In the accompanying diagram the reader can follow the wonderful combinations of this game, called *ku tjhuma* or *hlazelana*. There are two sides, each with its pipe. Three men, A. B. C. oppose three others, D. E. F. First of all, each side protects itself by making a saliva fence, line X. Q. for the first side, R. U. for the second. Unhappily for D. E. F. the saliva dries up on the point Z. W. and so their fence is broken. A takes his advantage. He begins to squirt out his saliva on the line *a*, *b*, *c*, *d*..., passes through the opening Z. W., and, having come back victoriously to *e*, he has destroyed all the fortifications R. Z. Suppose D. wants to

1 [i.e. hemp smoking -- Analyst]

1: Junod M-5 (1895-1909)1927 Thonga

524 protect himself. He tries to close the access to his position by drawing the line *f*, *g*. But, arrived at *g*, he comes to the end of his saliva (a helela), and A. who started at *h*, having arrived at *i*, turns round the point *g*, where his enemy has stopped miserably, and, going on, *j*, *k*, reaches the opening *d* and triumphantly ends his campaign in *e*!

But E. of the opposite camp has noticed a gate in the barrier X. Q. The saliva has dried there. He quickly carries his blow-pipe across the battle field, squirting all the time, and passes through the opening Y. He draws the line *l*, *m*, *n*, *o* and so destroys the part Q. Y. of the fortification X. Q. Should B. be quick enough, he might prevent him accomplishing his plan by drawing the line *p*. *q*... And so on! Young men, even men of ripe age, take an immense delight in these saliva battles. But the saliva must be blackish... It must be *ntjutju* saliva, viz., saliva produced by hemp, and not the ordinary white saliva, called *matjafula*. Should one of the players try to supplement the blackish by the white, he would be disqualified... His enemy would seize him by the forehead, and force him to lift his head and stop his attack. Should he go on, however, the other would say : "What ? You come to me with matjafula!" This may lead to quarrels, even to blows... The hemp-pipe falls down and it all ends in cordial laughter.

276 861 789 This hemp-smoking custom becomes a passion with many young men. To cure them their parents break the pipe, take a little of the soot which is found inside, and mix it with their food without their being aware of it. When this has been done three times, it is said to fill them with disgust for hemp... Similia similibus curantur... We shall often meet with this medical principle in the Thonga superstitions.

524 171 The most interesting game played by men, a game which fascinates them and which is certainly more refined than hemp-smoking, is the *tshuba*. It is at the same time one of the most widespread games of mankind. Mr. Stewart Culin says, in the Report of the Smithsonian Institute for 1893 and 1894, that it is played under the same name by the American Negroes, and that it is but a variety of the *mancala*, the national game of Africa,

1: Junod M-5 (1895-1909) 1927 Thonga

524/171 which is found in many other countries, Ceylon, Indo-China, Bombay, Java, Jerusalem, Liberia, Abyssinia, Cairo, Gabon, Angola and amongst the Central African tribes. From the ethnographic point of view and for purposes of comparison it is, therefore, very interesting to note its rules all over the world. 524 I tried (and I think successfully), to discover those of the Thongas, which at first seemed to me incomprehensible. The accompany-

Phot. A. Bore

Men playing tshuba naer Rikatla.

ing illustration will help to explain them. The apparatus required is most simple. Let us imagine it played in its most elementary form, when two men only are engaged in it. Each of them digs two rows of four little holes, behind which he squats. They face each other. So there will be sixteen holes, eight belonging to *A* and eight to *B*. In each hole they put two stones, either real stones or fruit stones. Those of the kanye fruit are mostly used, but, by preference, Natives play with the pretty shining grey seeds of a shrub found near the sea, which resemble the marbles used by European boys.

No. I shows two players ready to commence, with the sixteen

holes filled. *A* must always follow the course 4, 3, 2, 1, 5, 6, 7, 8 and *B* 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 7, 6, 5.

II. *B* starts. He takes the two stones out of hole 6 and puts one in 5, one in 1.

III. He goes on taking the stones out of one hole and putting them, always one at a time, into the following holes, till his last stone reaches an empty hole So he chooses three which are in 1 and puts them, one in 2, one in 3, one in 4.

IV. He chooses the three which are in hole 4 and distributes them in 8, 7, 6. The last one having reached an empty hole, he has succeeded ; he wins and takes the stones of *A* in holes 6 and 2, which are opposite the hole he has reached. This taking is called *ku tha*. Moreover he has the right to *kill* (dlaya) another hole by taking its contents. He chooses hole 1. I represent the regular taking (winning) by a black dot, and the supplementary killing by a cross in the hole. Having *beaten* (ku ba, such is the technical word employed when a player has succeeded in taking his enemy's stones), he stops and *A* starts.

V. A starts from hole 5, takes the two stones, and puts one in 6, one in 7.

VI. He takes the three stones in 7 and distributes them in 8, 4 & 3.

VII. He takes the three stones of 3 and puts them in 2, 1, 5 : "A bile!"—"He has beaten." He wins the three stones of hole 5 of *B*, opposite hole 5 which he has reached. Moreover he takes and "kills" the three which are in hole 8.

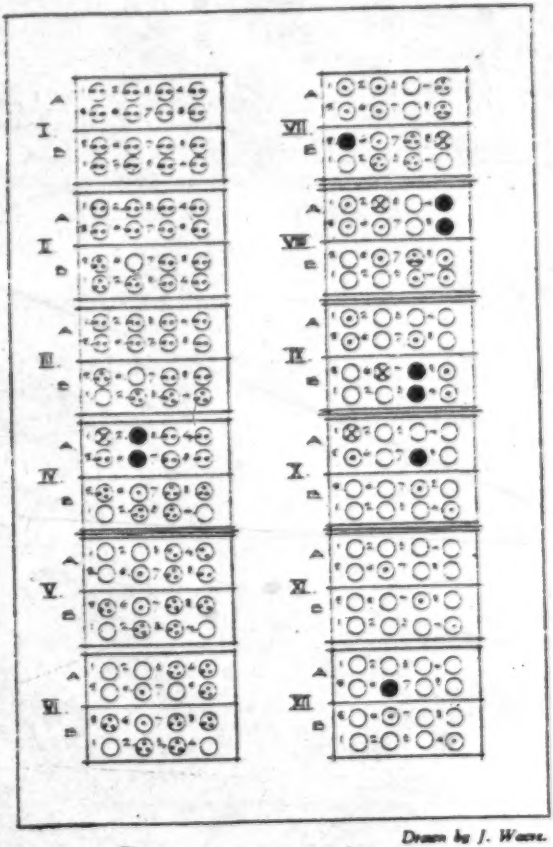
VIII. *B* takes his turn. He starts from 2 and reaches with his last stone 8 : "A bile" : 8 was empty. So he picks up the three stones in his enemy's hole 8 and the three in hole 4. He kills moreover the single stone in 2.

IX. *A* who has now only three stones left, one in 1, one in 5 and one in 6, starts from 6, puts his single stone in 7 and picks up those of holes 7 and 3 of *B*. He moreover "kills" 6.

X. *B* moves his stone from 8 to 7 ; he picks up 7 and in addition he "kills" 11

524 XI. *A* starts with his last stone from 5 to 6. But there is nothing opposite to him, nothing to pick up, nothing to kill!

XII. *B* moves from 7 to 6. He picks up the last stone of *A*



Drawn by J. Weave.

The tshuba game and its laws.

who is thus beaten (a mphile). He has vanquished him! (A mu mphyinshile!)

The rules are clear enough and this game does not seem to be very difficult. It is, however, most complicated, and I do not

wonder that men sometimes spend half the day, bending down over the ground, talking with animation and sometimes fighting when they think that one of them has transgressed the rules. 524

When the tshuba has only four holes in a row, it is called *shimunana* (from *mune*, four) and is not very exciting. But it can also be played with 8, 10, 16, or even 22 holes, and then it becomes very complicated. Six holes will not do (a psi thi), because successful combinations are impossible. I have also learned the tshuba of 16 holes. Let us suppose our two players to be *A* & *B*; we number their 16 holes from left to right, the outer and inner rows bearing the same numbers. *A* will start from hole 12 outer row, and will follow the prescribed course all round his holes, going from left to right, until he comes back successfully to the same hole. He will shout: "tsheun!", imitating the noise of a gun, and pick up his enemy's stone in holes 12 of the outer and inner row, and "kill" in *B*'s outer row holes 15 & 13. *B* will start from hole 14 of the inner row and reach 12 of the same row. He picks up the stones in the two holes 12 of *A* and "kills" hole 3 in the outer row, etc. etc... Hours will sometimes elapse before one player has beaten the other.

A single stone in a hole is called *tshonga*. Two stones are called *mbiri*. If the following holes are empty, and if these stones cannot lead the players further, *mbiri* takes the name of *mpalati*. It is bad luck! (Compare No. IX, on the drawing.) When you arrive with your last stone opposite two full holes, and consequently pick up 4, 5, 6 stones at a time, it is luck! It is *malu*. When only one hole is occupied and you win only one or two stones, it is *muhaha*. You have beaten in a "muhaha". (U bile muhahen.) When you do not reach the place you aimed at, not having had enough stones, you are said "to sleep on the road." When you start, full of courage, hoping to succeed, you say; "I go to kill meat" (ndji ya dlaya nyama), and this expression shows that the game represents two hunting parties. But it evidently also represents a fight, as do most of the games; hence the cries of triumph which accompany it. When one of the players happens to empty two holes with three stones in each, he says: "The fight is hot! (sha lwa). I have captured warriors!" If they contain

524 but one stone, a poor *tshonga*, he says: "I have only caught women!"

524 177 461 Fighting and hunting are great sports for Natives; hence the popularity of the tshuba game. It has become such a passion with the men that they neglect all their duties to indulge in it, and it has been necessary, in certain Christian villages, to prohibit the tshuba altogether, as the whole male population was abandoning its work for the game!

461 538 517 826 The *evening games* are happily not so dangerous for the moral well-being of the village. Women who have worked the whole day now have their innings. This is the *tha* par excellence, the most refined amusement, the story telling. It takes place at eventide. It is taboo to *tha* in the middle of the day. Those who should transgress the law would become bald (!), and persons affected with loss of hair are commonly and jocosely accused of having told tales at midday. So, when the moon shines, when all the work of the day is ended, all the inhabitants assemble at one of the firesides to amuse themselves. They rarely gather together on the hubo for that purpose, as the square is reserved 524 for the discussion of matters of importance or for dances. The diversions at first consist of a parlour game, which is also known amongst Europeans, *guessing the charcoal piece (mhumhana)*. Two sides are formed opposite each other, women on one side, men on the other. One of the women, holding a piece of charcoal, puts it into the hands of one of the other partners, saying: "Dana, u shura ñwanaaaa'nga," (eat and be satisfied, my child). Then both present their closed hands to the other side saying: "Mhumha!" The man opposite must guess in which hand the charcoal is hidden. He flips one of the four hands with his finger saying: "Give me! Here it is!" If he has guessed rightly, he has won, and then proceeds in his turn to hide the charcoal in the hand of one of his own side. When they have had enough of this game and wish to finish it in the proper manner, *they pull their fingers* and make them crack *(ku ba tindjwati)*. Each of them pulls a finger in turn. The first who is unable to produce a sound is expelled from his side. Then those who have been beaten make faces, as ugly or funny as they can, at their victors; these must

524 keep serious and not laugh. Should they be unable to keep their countenances, their victory is lost!

538 But these games are only a preliminary. The farther we go, the nearer we get to true literature! Now they ask each other *riddles (psitekatekisa)*, simple and antiphonic. We shall study this form of folklore later on... If the second side is unable to give the right answer to the riddle, it asks permission to propose one in its turn and so the intellectual combat goes on until they have exhausted the series of riddles they know. Those who have had the worst of the duel must pay the forfeit by *telling tales (tha psihetana)*. A woman may be present who is a renowned story-teller and she holds the whole company under the charm of her tale for half an hour, perhaps longer... Children shudder when they hear the terrible story of the bogey man! They burst into laughter when she describes the funny tricks of the Hare, or of the frog *Shinana*. They heartily approve when the younger brother, despised by his elders, becomes their saviour and teaches them a good lesson... Thonga folk-lore is very rich; it is one of the most interesting manifestations of the psychic life of the tribe. We shall study it with the attention it deserves in Part V of this work. Here it is sufficient to show what a great and happy part it plays in the life of the village.

E. RULES OF POLITENESS AND HOSPITALITY.

576 The village life is dominated by the *respect for hierarchy*. I do
769 not think this term is exaggerated. Etymologically hierarchy
593 conveys not only a moral but a religious idea. This religious feeling is not absent in the fear felt by a younger brother for his elder, because the elder member of the family is its priest, the only possible intermediary between the family and its gods (See Part VI). So no wonder if, in their relations with each other, though these are extremely free and natural, Natives follow strict rules of etiquette.

643 a bad chief. He did not even allow "bandla," viz, the gathering of men in the capital, because he was full of jealousy (mona). If he had not been placed in the chieftainship and supported by the White Government, he might have been deposed. Cases in which a chief has been deprived of his right and replaced by another man are not wanting (1). I have even heard of a chief in the Shiridja clan who was put to death. Deposal is generally proclaimed by a council of the royal family.

To reign over a Bantu clan requires much tact, ability and patience. The chief must be a father to his people and not a tyrant (2).

2) The system of government.

643 595 In order to keep in touch with his subjects, a chief generally places his wives in the various provinces of his little kingdom

(1) The annals of the Nkuna tribe provide an instance of the deposal not only of a certain chief but of the elder branch of the royal family, owing to an act which hurt the human feelings of the clan. We have already met with the name of Shithlelana, son of Nkuna, who lived at least 300 years ago. His principal wife was Nwahubyana. In his old age he was very ill and the woman, fearing lest he should die in her hut, drove him away; he was obliged to take refuge in the hut of another of his wives, Nwantimba, mother of Rinono, and died there. Then the headmen assembled and said: "As Nwahubyana has driven away her husband from her hut, she has also driven away the chieftainship from her son. He shall not reign. Rinono shall reign because he is the son of the woman who took care of the sick chief." This story, in which we see the sacred law of succession transgressed for a moral reason, is most interesting because it provides a good illustration of the conception of the clan regarding chieftainship, and proves that, even in ancient times, feelings of humanity could have more weight with the tribe than an article of the royal code.

643 524 (2) Two interesting Thonga riddles illustrate this disposition to criticise chiefs. The first riddle enigmatically describes the characteristics of an unworthy chief; it comes from the banks of the Limpopo:

Bupsa ga shisule. — Hosi leyi i ni mona...
Some cyclamen flour. — This chief is full of hatred...

The shisule — a word which I translate by cyclamen — is a plant which grows on the ant-hills, bearing large tubercles; these can be cooked and ground into flour; but it is only good in appearance. the taste is unpleasant and nauseating. This chief is bad! He is like that flour! Corruptio optimi pessima!

Here is another riddle which holds the chiefs up to ridicule rather wittily:

Timsindji tibiri ti rendjeleka tchuka. — Tihosi tibiri ti hleba nandja.
Two mice chase one another round an ant-hill (They will never meet)
— Two chiefs malign a subject. (They also will never meet, i. e. agree.)

Each wants to have the last word and will therefore depreciate the arguments of his opponent. He will seek to disprove the statements of the other chief, making fresh ones which the latter will seek to refute in his turn!

faculty are very rare in primitive Native life, and we ought not to be astonished that this faculty has remained undeveloped. To pretend however that it is altogether wanting would be erroneous. I can give many proofs that it exists, and sometimes manifests itself in an interesting way.

First, in the game called *nyengeli-nyengeli mune*. The players place a number of fruit stones on the ground two by two. One turns his back, and the other player, pointing to the first group of two, asks: "Nyengeli nyengeli mune?" i.e: "How many stones are there?" The one whose back is turned replies: "Take one away and place it elsewhere," specifying where. The same thing is done with the second, and so on. Certain groups have eventually more stones than others. When a group is entirely scattered, the guesser says: "Makua ntsikitane," meaning "There are no more." The questioner then passes rapidly from group to group, over and over again, and the guesser must state how many stones each group contains. The game requires a considerable effort of memory.

Second proof: Shinangana! Shinangana is a man living in Spelonken, near Elim Station, a raw Native who is ignorant of the art of reading and writing, and who never went to school, but who has created a *chronology* embracing the past 70 years. He knows what has happened in each year since 1859, and has arrived unaided at the conception of an era. His era starts from the emigration of the Thonga tribes into the Transvaal, when they fled before Manukosi, on the return of the Ngoni chief from the Mosapa or Gaza country (I. p. 28). The Nkunas, Mavundjas, Tsungus and other Hlabi clans were obliged at that time to take refuge in Spelonken, and this is the beginning of the era. Most of the years after that great event have their special designation. I had the good fortune to have an interview with Shinangana in 1905 and was able to note the details of his chronology, as he dictated them to me. After having enumerated all these years, he concluded in a triumphant tone with the exclamation: "All these years since the return of Manukosi make five hundred, and three hundred, and four months!" This is a most curious piece of Native historiography, I think quite unique in the whole Thonga tribe.

538 Here the sense is at once apparent.

6) Mbuti ya shihaha a yi belekeli ntlhambin.
A good goat does not bring forth in the midst of the flock.

I heard this proverb in one of our Synods. One of the Native members wished to exhort his co-delegates to abstain from giving their advice, and voting precipitately on a certain subject : let us rather go outside, and discuss amongst ourselves, and when we have come to an understanding we will come back and vote as one man!

This last example shows how such proverbs are used... They are sometimes quoted in a low voice, so as to be heard only by those whom it is desired to warn. It is an instance of the *phamba* just referred to.

Compare also the proverb quoted (p. 21) in connection with tilling the fields :

Do not look at the weeds and think : Now I have tilled a large field !

Do not be satisfied by mere external appearances! Weeds may be plentiful, yet the field be small!

Hundreds of such sayings might be collected (1), though I do not think they are so extensively used as, for instance, in the Sutho tribe, where M. Jacottet told me he collected a thousand of them. The Thongas replace them by riddles, which seem to be more developed amongst this people than in the neighbouring tribes.

II. *Riddles.*

524 I have already described (I. p. 350) the part riddles play in the games of the Thonga village. The riddle, *mhumhana*, consists first in divining where the piece of charcoal is hidden, and in that

671 538 (1) We might also regard as proverbs, and include under this heading, the figurative terminology used to express the principles of right and justice, which are, as it were, a primitive codification of the common law, and to which I have previously referred — as for instance the curious sentence : A cow which has calved is not used for payin a debt. (I. p. 217).

case it is merely a matter of guess work. But it may have a more literary character, when it consists in a more or less witty question requiring a given reply. The answer is here contained in one word ; so these riddles may be called *riddles in one sentence*. 524

Leshi u nga khandjiyiki nsinya ya shone, n'shini? — Hi ndjulu.
What is the thing up the trunk of which one cannot climb? It is the juncus.
Leshi nhaka nenge wa shone u nga rwali hi ku bindja u ya tlhasa shilungwin, n'shini? — Hi nsuna.
What is the animal whose leg is so heavy that you could not carry it to Lourenço Marques? — The mosquito (which is so very light!)
Leshi shi nga heta hubo ya ka Machakene, shi ndjundja, shi kwala hubyen? — Hi nhwala!
What is it that is all over the square at Machakene, that creeps and crawls about on it? It is the louse!

This last is full of malice! The village of Machakene, formerly in the immediate vicinity of Lourenço Marques, where the fashionable European quarter is now situated, was the place where men arriving from the interior to find work at the seaport usually passed the night. They appear to have been somewhat annoyed with unwelcome attentions! Hence the riddle.

Here is a rather more difficult one :

Tiban leshi, nambi mamana wa ñwana a ku mu randja ngopfu, loko a tlhasa kaya a nga hluleka ka ku mu yamukela? — Hi nyimba.
Guess what it is that a mother loves dearly but which could not run to meet her on her return home? — It is the unborn babe in her womb.

Another riddle of the same kind is this :

Tiba leshi, nambi shi shongile, afaka u nga ti wopsana na ye? — Hi makwenu.
Do you know the person to whom you would not make an improper proposal, however handsome she may be? — It is your sister.
Leshi nsinya ya shone yi nga bonekiki, ntshini? — Yendje-yendje.
The thing of which the stem is inviaible, what is it? — The cuscuta.

This plant is a cause of wonder to Natives, because its root and stem are so rarely seen. It is known that it grows from a root, but when it has developed, the stem dies and the plant lives on as a parasite.

Leshi nambi wa ba, ntjonsi wa kone wu nga boneki? — I mati.
The thing which you can beat without leaving a scar? — Water.

524 Here is one more which has a more philosophical character and which may be of later origin.

Leshi nga hamba Tilo ni Misaba, hi tshini ? — Ntumbuluko !
The thing which made Heaven and Earth, what is it ? — Nature !

Ntumbuluko comes from ku tumbuluka, to be created, to appear, and is well translated by the word Nature (See Part VI, Chapter I).

The Thongas possess a plentiful supply of *riddles containing two statements*, which they call *psitekatekisana* and of which I have collected about a hundred. I could easily have found ten times as many. One of our female neighbours (Lishanyi) knew a great number of these and could pour them forth without stopping well on into the night.

Whoever is most expert at asking questions takes the lead, and commences with a kind of invocation of which I have not been able to discover the meaning : Nwanyanga mi[illegible]ti, lit. son of the moon, shadows. Then addressing one of the other players, and speaking very rapidly, he (or she) will say : "Teka, teka, teka (take, guess) heeee...!" following this up with the question to be asked, which forms the first part of the riddle ; the person addressed must immediately reply with the phrase forming the second part. If he is unable to answer, or gives a wrong reply, the questioner says : "Psi ku hlulile" — "you are beaten," and passes on to another player, again beginning with "teka, teka, teka" and asking the same question until some one is able to give the correct rejoinder. Hence the name of this game, psitekatekisana, i. e. things which you make others guess.

It will be seen that we are not here dealing with riddles in the true sense of the word, with solutions only to be arrived at by keenness of thought and reflection ; the answers to these must be learnt by heart, and it only requires a good memory to become an adept at the game. The ancestors, however, who composed the riddles, and handed them down to posterity, were by no means lacking in wit and ingenuity. The examples given below I owe mostly to Timotheo Mandlati, a Nkuna of Shiluvane, who wrote them down for me in the dialect of his own tribe ; some of

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them are in Hlengwe. I also obtained a good many from my Ronga informants, Spoon and Galu of Libombo, Titus, and Shilati, a blind man who thought himself very learned in the "riddling art," but understood very little of what he was talking about, and, in any case, was quite unable to give any explanation of his riddles. Some are the common property of both Ba-Ronga and Ba-Nkuna ; they seem to be very popular throughout the Thonga tribe. 115 524 524

To begin with, here are some examples of which *the inner meaning is not difficult to discover* :

Teka-teka-teka-he ! Tiba ro pahya hi matlhelo ? — Ndlopfu yi fa hi tshembeti.
The lake dries up at the edges ? — The elephant is killed by a small arrow.

A great result (the drying up of a lake, the death of an elephant) is often produced by a very small cause (the gradual evaporation of water at the edges, a little arrow). The idea is similar to that expressed in the proverb : "Il ne faut pas mépriser les petits commencements," or "small beginnings make great endings."

Ndja ha batla mpalala ? — Ndja ha hleketela...
I am still carving an iron wood stick ? — I am still thinking about it.

An undecided man might reply thus to those urging him to immediate action. The wood of the *mpalala* is extremely hard. "It is a long business to carve a figure of this wood" says the cunning fellow ; "I am not going to make up my mind about it in a hurry!"

Ndji pfumala tshati ; nha ndji ya tjhema nhonga ?
— Ndji pfumala ntlhambi ; nha ndji ya lobola munhu lweyo.
I have no axe, or I would go and cut a stick ?
— I have no oxen, or I would go and lobola this girl.

This is the sigh of the impecunious lover. In the first sentence he laments the want of an ordinary every-day object (an axe) which prevents his obtaining something he wishes for (a stick) ; he lets it be understood that a much more precious article is lacking (oxen, money, a lobolo) which would enable him to obtain something infinitely more to be desired (the girl he loves).

524 Ndji tshukumetele kwakwa, dji ya wa ngolongolo ?
— Ndji yamukele psikomo psi pfa ni Ba-Nhlabi.
I have thrown away my kwakwa ; it has rolled away to the ends of the earth (into distant lands) ?
I have accepted the hoes which come from the Ba-Hlabi.

I have sold my daughter in marriage to the people of Hlabi (on the other side of the Limpopo, further up than Bilene, in Gaza) ; by so doing I have lost my child for ever. She has disappeared like a round fruit (kwakwa) which, when thrown a long distance, rolls and rolls away until it can never again be found.— Moral : Don't let your girls marry foreigners (Compare I, p. 260).

Shiyindlwana mpfontsho ? — Mundjuku milandju.
The little hut falls down ? — To morrow, debts.

If you don't keep your house in good order, you will soon find yourself in difficulties. A disorderly life leads to debt.

In other riddles the meaning is not so self-evident as in the preceding examples. There are some which are simply *a comparison of two objects* or of an object and an idea which resembles it in some one particular. With the rapidity of perception characteristic of the Native mind, some clever individual has been struck by this resemblance, and has thereupon composed a riddle the obscurity of which is in direct proportion to its conciseness.

Rihondjo ra ndlopfu ku mpfara ? — Munhu wa ndlala tihanyi ?
The sound of a cracked elephant-tusk ? — The anger of a hungry man.

Both have a false ring.

This Nkuna riddle is met with amongst the Rongas, in the following form :

Litimbo la phala ku mbvutsho ? — Anunhu wa ndlala mahlundju.
The creaking of the dried sorghum stalk ? — The anger of a hungry man.

Sikiriki dja mbangwa ? — Longoloko dja Ba-Tschwa.
The stem of hemp ? — The Zulu formation (when on the march, in single file).

In the way the leaves grow on the hemp stalks, there is a suggestion of the formation, or rather of the forest of plumes of Zulu warriors on the march...

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Ntshiba ukulu wa mpfafati? — Ndjoko yikulu ya balungu.
The tall ntshiba? — The long tumblers of the Whites.

The ntshiba is the tallest tree on the Ronga hills, and casts a grateful shade. The long tumblers used by the Whites answer the same purpose; both conduce to the refreshment of the weary!

Tihuku ta ka Manyisa ta ka nhingena he paswka?
— Baŭwhanyana ba ka Manyisa ba ku kandja ba khisamile.
The fowls of Manyisa enter the fowl-house tails first?
— The Manyisa girls pound maize sitting down.

This is probably a sly hit at the girls of the Manyisa country [516] who are reported to sit down when crushing maize; everywhere else this operation is performed standing up. They don't do things like other people. — Chickens also sometimes do things the wrong way!

Riddles which refer to some *historical event* may be classed in a third category. The best known is that concerning Tembe and his sons. (See I, p. 23.) — Here is another:

Ndji fambi nhlangwa lokulu ndji heketa Mimaleyane?
— Ndji djimi nsimo leyikulu, ndji byala ndlowu yiŭwe.
I walked right across a big plain to accompany Mimaleyane?
— I hoed a large field and only planted a single pea.

This is doubtless the story of a rejected lover who thus wittily relates his discomfiture. He took all the trouble to accompany Mimaleyane a long way, right to her home, and received no reward for his gallantry. As well hoe a whole field and only plant one pea! A great deal of trouble for nothing!

A fourth category of riddles comprises those in which no real similarity of ideas would seem to exist, but only a *similitude in sound*, a sort of graceful alliteration which is pleasing to the ear. The two following examples are very popular and very pretty from the point of view of euphony:

He kumi nkuhlu, a wupfa, ka ku sala huhlu yiŭwe?
— He kumi mulungu, a wondja-wondja, ka ku sala ndjepfu yiŭwe.
We found a *nkuhlu* which ripens, which ripens; only one nut is left?
— We found a White man who gets thinner, thinner: nothing left but a hair of his beard.

The comparison of ideas is not difficult to perceive, but what conclusion or moral can the author mean to convey? None!

524 He has been merely led away by the musical charm of the words.

Lastly I would class in a final category *the riddles which are altogether incomprehensible*, of which there are quite a large number.

Be khumbi? — Mayo! Ku fa.
The people against the wall? — Ah! if only I were to die!

Zebedea, a very intelligent man, who gave me this riddle, could not tell me what it meant. Possibly the words may have been altered in the course of transmission from generation to generation. I am unable to say. In any case we are discouraged from expending our energy in trying to discover meanings in the *psitekatekisana* when they are too obscure by the fact that several of these questions, or primary phrases, can be answered in different ways; the answer, or second phrase, varies with the informant. Suppose for instance, that the following question be put:

Makhoi ya nyati yinga-yinga?
The horns of the buffalo wander hither and thither?

The answer may be the well-known proverb (p. 21).

U nga hone bibi u ku ndji rimele.
Do not contemplate the heaps of weeds saying to thyself: I have finished hoeing.

Or it may be:

Barara ba bambe ndji nabela.
I covet the fathers of other girls.

It may be that, in the parlour game previously described, when some one fails to give the right answer, he quotes the second sentence of another riddle on the spur of the moment, and so false connections are established between sentences which have no common meaning.

Are these *psitekatekisana* peculiar to our tribe, or are they to be met with elsewhere? I cannot be certain on this point, but I have not heard anything like them quoted from other places. Some bear a strong resemblance to the antithetic proverbs of Solomon. But it must be confessed that they are entirely lacking in the deep religious or moral meaning of most of the Jewish proverbs!

Amongst the first we have already noticed *falling stars* (p. 309); *the snail* (p. 338): should you meet with it on the road, you will soon hear that one of your relatives has died; *the stem of cuscuta* (yendje-yendje); (1) there are families, however, for which this is not of bad omen, but for other people it foretells misfortune; *the mbonga bee* belongs to the same class (p. 337); the various kinds of *mistletoe* are also of bad omen. So also is the *puff-adder* (p. 340), the *likure* (p. 340), a greyish slender snake: if it blows upon you, or bites you, you will grow thin and turn grey, like the animal itself; the long-legged bird *shitshinyariendjo* foretells misfortune on the road (I. p. 339) as do also the *buwumati* snake and the *nkangu bird.*

Other objects are of good omen; the beetle *Eccopteptera* and the *Mutilla* (p. 336), and especially the beetle *Bombolosi*, belonging to the Curculionidae family, a curious insect which drops to the ground and counterfeits death when touched or frightened; it is the symbol of riches. Natives hang it on a string at their door; I have heard of others hanging it in their hair; but in this case it is said to be placed there to eat lice!

All these superstitions are believed in more or less seriously. But, in order to know their fate and what they must do to avoid misfortune, Thongas have recourse to true methods of divination. Amongst these mantic practices some are simple and some more elaborate.

II. *Less important Means of Divination.*

1) Amongst these I may mention first the *pshapsha*, which corresponds to our "drawing lots" and is performed exactly in the same way by placing pieces of grass or sticks of different length between the fingers, and pulling out one of them, having

(1) The cuscuta sometimes covers large patches of ground on the sandy hills of Thongaland; as is well-known, it has a regular root, but afterwards becomes a parasite on the vegetables to which it attaches itself, whilst its stem and root die. This fact has been noticed by the Natives, and has given the cuscuta a special value in their eyes. When they happen to find a plant which still retains its stem and root, magicians make use of these, especially in their exorcism rites. But this stem, which is so rare, is a bad omen for ordinary people.

524 first decided to act in such and such a way if the longer or the
787 shorter grass be drawn. This is more or less a game and is employed mostly by children.

787 2) Another more serious method of divination is the *mondjo*, the enchanted philter, used as a regular means of procedure to obtain evidence in Court (I. p. 443), especially to discover wizards and adulterous women. It has been described at full length in the preceding paragraph.

3) A third is the *divination by ecstasy* which is employed by the magician when "smelling out" wizards. The old men assert that, in former times, there were diviners who could guess anything when in that peculiar psychological state in which the subliminal faculties may develop to a marvellous extent. Hendrick, a very old Native of Khosen, said to me, speaking of one of these *shintsa* (the term by which these diviners are known) : "He used to travel all through the land, practising his art in the villages. He was able to describe minutely a goat which he had never seen ; or if somebody had buried something in a certain place to test him, he would go straight to the spot and say : 'Dig in the earth here, and you will find it.' Viguet also asserted that there were formerly true and trustworthy diviners in the Hlabi clans, and I myself heard trustworthy witnesses assert that a certain diviner who had been called into a village near Rikatla actually discovered some pounds sterling which had been hidden by their owner, who was no longer in the country.

4 & 5) A young man of the Mabota clan described to me two other methods of divination employed by his father, old Tumben (I. p. 531). One was called the *Small Mug* (shintjekwana). The diviner took a wooden mug in his left hand and held it by the handle. He placed in it an antelope's or goat's horn, and with his right hand he struck his right leg, putting the question to which he wanted an answer. He would say : "Is the matter really as I say?" If he had guessed rightly, the horn began to move to and fro ; if not, it remained quiet. Tumben also consulted the oracles by means of the *Small Calabash* (nhungubane). This calabash had some rags hanging from its neck, and a string was passed round it by which he held it dandling from the thumb of his left hand. He